

KATE HELMS

Fifth Generation Native Floridian

Kate Helms is an artist, and scientist, is currently working as environmental professional on the west coast of Florida, where she oversees stormwater pollution prevention efforts for a local municipality. She has previously worked on projects dealing with Everglades restoration, the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, oyster restoration, wetlands mitigation, and compliance and enforcement with environmental regulations as a member of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Artist Statement:

In Florida, wetlands are unceremoniously interred under clean, comforting fill. Parched canal banks emerge from muck and limerock. Myth replaces reality; a parroted paradise is born of stout St. Augustine grass, primly planted medians, perfectly spaced palms, and gracefully arcing sprinkler showers.

My photographs, sculptures, and installations seek to unflinchingly embrace this subtropical simulacrum, this false Eden. Inflatable alligators invade the Everglades. Crusty, barnacle-like growths devour a Miami beachfront condo. I am reborn as a quixotic conquistadora, a feathered pinup shrouded in mosquito mesh, and a rogue scientist. The varied works are united by a desire to question cultural attitudes about the fabricated environments we inhabit and fetishize to the point of precarious delusion.

Colony II

2017

Colony II centers on fantasies of a luxuriously ornate home being dismantled by the climatic effects of sea level rise and tossed into the ocean, where it becomes an artificial reef for a variety of barnacle, coral, and sponge-like encrustations. In contrast to widespread coral bleaching, which is causing vast swaths of coral reefs to rapidly perish into milky oblivion, these new species spontaneously evolve to thrive in the changing environment. Incorporating Victorian furniture, the work references the beginnings of the industrial era, in which humans began to substantially contribute to climate change by adding heat-trapping gases such as carbon dioxide to the atmosphere.

KATE HELMS

Fifth Generation Native Floridian



Kate Helms is an artist, and scientist, is currently working as environmental professional on the west coast of Florida, where she oversees stormwater pollution prevention efforts for a local municipality. She has previously worked on projects dealing with Everglades restoration, the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, oyster restoration, wetlands mitigation, and compliance and enforcement with environmental regulations as a member of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Untitled

2017

Untitled features the private lair of an individual completely obsessed with sea level rise, who has collected bathymetric maps and painstakingly altered them to account for the rising waters of the future. Areas projected to be under water are blotted out with white paint, while depth measurements are obsessively crossed out and corrected based on NOAA predictions of future inundation.